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ABSTRACT

This paper describes programs for high risk students in the St. James R-1 (rural) School District in Missouri. The participants, staff, procedures, and effectiveness are briefly discussed for each program. Programs at the elementary level include: (1) an intervention program for K-2 students identified through screening; (2) a prescription learning computer lab for remedial reading and math; (3) a "class within a class" where a learning disabilities teacher serves students in the regular classroom; and (4) a teacher support team review where staff discusses strategies to assist teachers in dealing with "at risk" students. Programs at the secondary level include: (1) provision of a resource teacher during one period to provide academic assistance for students identified as high risk based on academic achievement; (2) cafeteria work study for educably-mentally-handicapped students; (3) a cadet teaching program which allows junior and senior high students to help elementary teachers and students in the classroom; (4) the Home Base Program in which the teacher meets daily with students to discuss topics affecting teenagers; (5) a writing lab for students with poor writing skills to gain extended composition practice; (6) Saturday School for students receiving an "F" at midterm or quarter grading periods; (7) peer tutoring by high school students for elementary students; (8) the Alternative Learning Center as a disciplinary measure to isolate students from classmates; and (9) the Drug Awareness Program, which uses an Advisory Council comprised of community leaders. (KS)

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A K-12 Approach: Cost-Effective "At Risk" Program in a Rural Setting

by
Mr. Julian M. Kite

Missouri's Fourth Students At Risk Conference was held March 5 and 6, 1991, at Tan-Tar-A (Lake of the Ozarks). As part of that conference, the following program was presented: A K-12 Approach: Cost-Effective "At Risk" Program in a Rural Setting. Chairperson for the presentation was Mr. Julian M. Kite (Language Arts Chairperson (7-12) and high school teacher in the St. James R-1 School District). Other program presenters, all from the St. James School District, were Mrs. Jean Crafton (elementary teacher), Mrs. Elaine Harrison (junior high teacher), and Mr. William J. Price (Drug Awareness Coordinator and high school teacher).

St. James R-1 School District, like many smaller school districts in Missouri is facing a "real" financial crunch. However, the "At Risk Student" is a real concern of the school district, as demonstrated by the formation of a School Improvement Committee (one hundred persons involved: students, parents, business community, teachers, school personnel, administrators, and Board of Education members). The Committee is addressing the "needs" of the school and community and is now in "Action Teams," each addressing a goal recognized as important to all students.

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The "At Risk" program at St. James is the result of three aspects: (1) government programs applied for and granted; (2) teacher created (part of Career Ladder and motivation/creativity); (3) district created (addressing "needs" of students).

The St. James R-1 School District has 1406 students K-12, housed in two building complexes (elementary and junior/senior high). Enrollment, at this time, is stable. Its professional staff has ninety-two teachers, with forty-two percent holding advanced degrees, and sixty percent having served the school district for ten or more years. The school district also "services" some residents of Boys Town of Missouri (a campus is located outside of the town). Graduates of St. James choose a variety of "future" plans: 47.4% enter college, 7.0% are post-secondary non-college, 23.6% become employed, 14.9% enter the military, and 7.0% list "Other."

The "At Risk" Programs currently at the elementary level include:

(1) Intervention Program - This program began with an Incentive Grant in 1988 for grades K-1. Later, grade 2 was added. Kindergartners were tested at early screening in the spring, with a follow-up screening in the fall. 13-15 students are within the Intervention class. A part-time aide

is present to assist the teacher. There have been several positive results: students experience success, fewer behavioral problems, and more parent involvement. Most students, within this program, were served without pullout programs. Concerns expressed by staff were due to the grouping and that the class often seemed to be segregated from the mainstream. There was no retention of many students, who would probably have been retained due to immaturity. An Alternate Plan is being used this school year: All Day Kindergarten with an aide involving 13 student students, and a one-half step (20 students) for those who qualify for a K-1 class (two teachers and a Chapter One teacher will staff, and the following year, the students will go to grade 1 (transition room).

(2) Prescription Learning (Computer Lab) - Remedial Reading and Math (K-3) - Nine computers (with software) are available through Chapter One funds. Software is geared to individual needs. A "remedial" teacher meets with the classroom teacher, weekly, to discuss needs. This program has been quite successful due to students seeing immediate success, life-skills being learned, and building self-confidence and self-image.

(3) Class Within A Class - A L.D. (learning disability) teacher goes to the language arts classes. A joint

collaborative relationship exists between the "special" and "regular" classroom teachers, using a service delivery model for mainstreaming mild-to-moderate L.D. students. This program is used for grades 3-6. The students prefer remaining in the regular classroom; the pull-out resulted in loss of time, disruption, and increased disorganization. Senior citizen volunteers are used as assistants in the L.D. resource room. This addition to the program has been beneficial to the students and the teacher. Further, supplemental help is given students in the regular classroom on an individual basis.

(4) Teacher Support Team Review - Teacher representatives from each grade level, counselors, and principal meet each week to discuss strategies that might be used to assist teachers in dealing with "At Risk" students. Teachers can also provide solutions, and the team may refer students for testing--L.D. or B.D.

In addition to these program, elementary teachers have a separation period (45 minutes) each day, which is helpful for planning for and discussing students. Sixth grade teachers meet weekly, on Wednesday, to discuss "At Risk" students. Journals are kept and once a month students that have been discussed are reviewed to see if strategies are working. In April teachers meet with the junior high principal/counselor

to discuss students identified as "At Risk" (due to poor study skills or low behavioral skill) on the sixth grade level. In May teachers meet with the junior high faculty to discuss individual students and problems--if the junior high principal feels it is necessary.

St. James Junior/Senior High has several programs being used to identify and help the "At Risk" students:

(1) Intervention - This program identifies high-risk students, based on academic achievement. A resource teacher, during one period, is provided to help. Students experiencing post retention go to the resource teacher for test-taking, to improve study skills, and to better organize homework. Letters are sent home on a weekly basis. No direct grades are given by the resource teacher.

(2) Cafeteria Work Study - This program involves tenth grade E.M.H. students. Students receive pay, and further, specific duties include hygiene, food preparation, table preparation, serving, cleaning up, and time sheets. Job skills class deals with work ethic, applications, interviewing, behavior, and job security. An aide is provided, and this person gives input for a grade given by the teacher. The program allows for students to be better prepared for work outside, be more productive, be more independent, and develop a desire/ability to consider more

challenging work.

(3) Cadet Teaching - This program is available to upper level junior-senior high school students. The students, in this program, help elementary teachers and students in the classroom. To be in the program, C's or above grades are required, good attendance, and membership in F.T.A. (Future Teachers of America). Students supply the cadet supervisor with information sheets and preferences of teachers and grade level. Students chosen receive ten hours of training. The program is daily, with cadets working with individuals or groups of students, grading or running off papers, and helping students who have been absent to catch up. Students are graded (60% of grade recommended by elementary teacher - 40% by supervisor as a result of an educational article critique, a topic paper, and daily journals). This program has been very positive and successful. There is a strong demand each year for cadet teachers from elementary teachers, and a large number of students wish to take part in the program. Cost of the program is one period pay for the teacher-supervisor.

(4) Home Base - The Home Base Program was organized in 1988 and put into place in the 1989-90 school year. The basic purpose of Home Base was to address the "needs" of students (including "At Risk" students). This program meets daily.

Each teacher is assigned approximately 16 students. In the daily meeting time, topics affecting teenagers are addressed. Specific services include counseling, monthly conferences dealing with school/social problems, and large group assemblies on such topics as drug use and teenage suicide, which are then discussed in small groups in the Home Base setting. Extension next year will be the use of Channel One to formulate discussion of student-interest news topics.

(5) Writing Lab - This facility was established during the current school year. Students are placed in the Writing Lab for work in grammar, composition, and cross-discipline writing assignments. The Lab, now, is manned four periods a day and students using the facility is on a referral and/or voluntary basis. After a Writing Assessment (which is held in December) those students receiving 2 or below on a "holistic" scale of 6 are placed in the lab for extended composition practice. Extension plans for 1991-92 school year will include formal writing (grades 9-12) and career planning (grades 9-12).

(6) Saturday School - This program was designed for those students who receive "F" at midterm or quarter grading periods and are required to attend for eligibility in co-curricular activities. However, students needing assistance from a tutor are accepted. The supervisor works directly

with teachers of students attending Saturday School. The student (by Thursday of each week) fills out a form stating assignments (signature of teachers required) and those assignments are submitted to the Saturday School supervisor. Peer tutoring is encouraged and appears to be successfully working. Always present is a professional teacher, who does individual counseling when needed.

(7) Peer Tutoring - St. James provides tutoring, by high school students, for any student in grades 1-6. Peer Tutoring is available every school day, every hour of the day. High school students, who wish to serve as tutors, complete an application form with the high school counselor, who evaluates along with the elementary counselor and the Peer Tutoring coordinator. The grading is based on a pass/fail system, with 1/2 semester credit granted for successful completion. The grading criteria is attendance, attitude, ability, and accomplishment, as observed by the elementary teacher. Further, significant flexibility is allowed to promote "accountability" on the part of the tutors. Tutors chosen for the program are trained in the LAUBACH WAY TO READ.

(8) ALC (Alternative Learning Center) - This center provides an effective deterrent to misconduct by junior and senior high school students (grades 7-12). An area, away

from the mainstream of day-to-day activities of students, has been established. In this area there are individual cubicles (study areas) provided for students to complete segregation from other students. This program is not designed to be "mental harassment," but rather "total isolation from classmates and their peer group" combined with a total loss of privileges. This isolation DOES serve as an effective deterrent to misconduct, and further, allows discipline (by the administration) without out-of-school suspension. On a limited basis, the ALC provides a temporary study area for students behind in classwork. The supervisor places completed work in appropriate teacher mailboxes.

and lastly--

(9) Drug Awareness Program - This program is funded, partially, by Chapter 2/Title 3-Drug Free Schools and Communities Program through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Drug Awareness coordinator is responsible for creating an environment, within the school system, that essentially says "drug free is better." Posters, guest lecturers, taped material, workbook material (especially for grades 1-6) and an Advisory Council to accomplish goals are utilized. The Advisory Council is comprised of community leaders, church leaders (including youth groups), business and professional leaders,

representatives of the school administration and staff, and an emphasis on parental involvement. This program goes beyond the confines of the school----it is a school/community program. Activities are coordinated with churches, civic groups, and summer programs (such as Red-Ribbon Campaign to "tie-up" St James Against Drugs), and the PTA.

The "At Risk" student is not only the result of academic consideration, but social as well. The St. James School District, while restricted financially, strives to meet the "needs" of all students "At Risk."

If you have questions concerning any/all of the programs listed, please contact Mr. Julian M. Kite at John F. Hodge High School, 101 E. Scioto Street, St. James, Missouri 65559.